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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2008

In Today's Papers

The Ergenekon Trial Begins

All papers give front-page and extensive coverage to the first day of the Ergenekon trial yesterday in Silivri, Istanbul. The general tone of papers is that there was chaos and disorganization because the room where the hearing took place could not fit all of the suspects and lawyers. The head judge of the court, Koksal Sengun, postponed the hearing to Thursday and decided that those suspects who are in jail and those who are not will give statements in separate hearings and that each suspect will be defended by a maximum of three lawyers. Lawyers reacted to the first decision saying that this will not be a fair trial unless one suspect hears the statement of another one. Mainstream Milliyet notes that "[The case] Began with Chaos" in its headline. Mainstream Aksam's headline is, "The First Day is a Fiasco." Islamist-oriented Zaman claims that "the supporters of the suspects in jail tried to block the activities of the court delegation from outside and inside. Protestors belonging to the Ataturkist Thought Association and the Labor Party protested with flags with iron bars in front of the Silivri Prison." Radically Islamist Vakit reports that "The Gang Still Seeks Chaos..".

Editorial commentary on The Ergenekon Trial

Cuneyt Ulsever commented in mainstream Hurriyet: "'The Ergenekon trial began with chaos, just as the case has created chaos in Turkey. This is a strange country. To tell you sincerely, I am very confused about the trial. Some of the elements of the trial make me think that Turkey will finally confront itself and that the last obstacles to the rule of law will be abolished. Some other elements make me think that some people will go too far to include everyone against the government in this business. On the other hand, I have doubts on how seriously the evidence will be scrutinized.'

Ergun Babahan wrote in mainstream Sabah: "On March 16, 1978, seven students from Istanbul University were killed in a bomb attack and many others were injured. That incident led to an atmosphere that resulted in a coup. Just like the Dink murder, it was a massacre conducted with the support of state officials and the murderers were never found. Yesterday, all the news agencies reported that the court case on the March 16th incident had closed due to statute of

limitations. The Ergenekon case represents the re-opening of the March 16th case but with different suspects. That is why the Ergenekon case is very important for me and I am following it closely. I want everyone to understand that in this country no one will be allowed to conduct illegal acts and that anyone acting illegally will be tried and punished. I want no one to dare to play with people's lives in the name of patriotism for their own political aims. Unfortunately, yesterday's trial started in a chaotic atmosphere. However, this doesn't minimize the trial's meaning and importance."

Fikret Bila wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "The Ergenekon trial started yesterday in chaos. This trial is creating political polarization. The picture outside the court was important - there were groups of demonstrators against the case from the Labor Party and Ataturk's associations while the Kurdish party DTP, Socialist Democracy Party, and Ozgur-Der members were protesting the afore-mentioned protestors. This atmosphere carries the risk that this case can create a political polarization between Turks and Kurds. Despite the political polarization and the arguments, the court should obey the judicial rules and find the facts. The judiciary has a very difficult job here, but it is necessary to trust the judiciary."

Barzani's Statements

Mainstream Hurriyet and mainstream Sabah report on statements by Massoud Barzani, leader of the regional Kurdish administration in northern Iraq, to the press yesterday in Erbil. Barzani reportedly told the press that "We have torn down the walls between Turkey and us, melted the ice and opened a new page on our relations. Turkey took a step to improve relations. The road for dialogue is open." He allegedly stated that he could not give any details on the content

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of the meeting with the Turkish delegation and that the meetings will continue and "they will also take place in Turkey."

PM Erdogan: "The Public cannot be intimidated by Terrorism" Vatan, Radikal, Sabah, Turkiye, Zaman, Milliyet and others: PM Erdogan addressed residents of Diyarbakir yesterday and said "despite terrorism, we will continue our reforms of public services, investments and democratization." Islamist oriented Zaman reports that participating in the opening ceremony of the new education year at the Dicle University in Diyarbakir, PM Erdogan harshly criticized the terrorist organization and its supporters. Erdogan said "Venders closed up their shops because of PKK threats. The PKK terrorist organization is sabotaging the development process in the southeast. There will be no investments in places where security is not established." Mainstream Vatan reports that many shops in Diyarbakir were closed yesterday to protest both the visit of Erdogan and the allegations Abdullah Ocalan was tortured in Imrali prison.

Meanwhile today's papers report about the PKK supporters' protests in different parts of Turkey. Mainstream Sabah reports that outlawed protests were held yesterday in Hakkari, Van, Sanliurfa, Tunceli, Adana, Igdir and Bingol. One protestor died yesterday during clashes with the police in Dogu Bayazit, Agri. Many shops pulled down their shutters in Diyarbakir, Batman, Hakkari, Yukseкова, Cizre, Nusaybin and Kiziltepe.

Editorial Commentary on the PKK Demonstrations

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Our reporter who followed Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Diyarbakir yesterday said that he had never seen such tension in the city before. Smoke from tire fires set by PKK members rose to the sky, most shops were closed, and some restaurant owners told our reporter and his other colleagues that they could not serve them food because they were afraid. During the same hours one person died in clashes between the police and PKK demonstrators in Dogubeyazit. There were protests not only in Diyarbakir or Dogubeyazit, but in all cities and towns whose municipalities are run by the DTP or in western provinces where the DTP is organized due to immigration from the east. The reason for the demonstrations was the fact that Abdullah Ocalan is being kept in prison. This is the number one subject on the DTP's agenda at the moment. The PKK has threatened to end PJAK's attempts to damage the regime in Iran if the U.S. does not stop sharing intelligence with Turkey. Since U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European

Affairs Dan Fried is in Ankara today, we can ask him about this."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Former DTP leader Nurettin Demirtas was sentenced to 15 months in prison on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda.
- Ali Askin, the vice-chairman of AKP branch in Tunceli, who was abducted by PKK terrorists on September 14, was set free.
- Constitutional Court president Hasim Kilic said the detailed ruling of the AKP closure case will be announced before Friday.
- The National Security Council will convene today to discuss the PKK, terrorism and the developments in northern Iraq
- During an Economy Coordination Committee Meeting, participants agreed that several steps should be taken in order to minimize the impacts of the global economic crisis on Turkey. State Minister Nazim Ekren said that global and national developments have started to affect Turkey's economy.

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International News

- 17 prisoners died in a jail riot in Mexico.
- U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Dan Fried said Russia is not complying with the agreement to return to its positions before the outbreak of hostilities with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.
- EU Enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn says next year Serbia might be given the status of EU candidate country.

WILSON